

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND UNDERGRADUATES' WRITING SKILLS, THE MEETING POINT: A CASE STUDY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN AND BAMIDELE OLUMILUA UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, IKERE EKITI

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ABSTRACT

This study has explored how the use of social media has impacted on the writing skills of undergraduates in University of Ilorin and Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere Ekiti (BOUESTI). The study design was descriptive survey and simple random sampling was applied to undergraduates by the administration of a structured questionnaire. The data was analyzed using weighted mean scores and standard deviations. The findings indicated that the overall social media usage among the students was high with a cluster mean outcome of 3.16. This implied that they utilised applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, both at school and during leisure. The research established that social media influenced certain writing abilities, and the cluster mean was 3.18. As one case in point, social media has an effect on spelling (mean = 3.52), academic tone (mean = 3.48), and transfer of informal punctuation patterns (mean = 3.01). The influence on abbreviations and sentence structure was however not very strong. The research also established that social media has a positive impact on the writing development of the students with a cluster mean of 3.07. Students agreed that social media enhances fluency in writing (mean = 3.41), enhances vocabulary (mean = 3.02), understandability of language (mean = 2.85), and creativity (mean = 3.11). Despite these negative influences were also identified The negative effects cluster average of 2.99 suggests moderate concerns, including the use of abbreviations in academic writing (mean = 3.01), the reduced concentration on spelling (mean = 3.11), and the challenges with punctuation (mean = 3.00); the lack of grammar decline, however, could not be strongly supported. The research proposes the integration of digital literacy into writing education, promotion of esponsible use of social media, and the strengthening of systems to support writing in universities.

Keywords: social media, writing skills, undergraduate students, academic writing, digital communication, English language.

Introduction

The English language occupies a highly significant position in Nigerian society, functioning as the dominant medium of communication across educational, political, administrative, legal, and socio-economic domains. In a nation characterised by linguistic diversity boasting of over 500 indigenous languages, English serves as the language of instruction in schools, the language of government, the press, commerce, religion, and the judiciary (Mohammed, 2015; Godiya, 2016; Ohia & Isaac, 2020; Ejengho & Ajibade, 2020). Eyisi (2004) affirms that English occupies a prestigious position in Nigerian society, while Liadi (2019) identifies English as a global language with the largest number of speakers in the world. As such, being proficient in English is closely linked to performance in school as it is the medium for examinations, classroom activities, and instructional materials.

Language itself is regarded as a fundamental marker of human identity, an innate gift that enables one to interact socially and express oneself (Ajekena, 2018; Oyeyemi, 2000; Obadare, 2020). In multilingual societies such as Nigeria, language is a key factor in national development, human interaction and social cohesion (Oyinloye & Fasae, 2020). Writing which is an integral component of language is a primary tool of communication and intellectual engagement (Agbuun, Ukume & Obiora, 2018). Although it is essential, writing is widely regarded as the most difficult of the four language skills because of its cognitive and psychomotor demands (Shewan, 2020; Osa-omoregie, 2020). As second language English speakers, Nigerian students find it difficult to be proficient in writing skills and make frequent errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure (Oyinloye & Fasae, 2020; Yara, 2010). These challenges allude to the centrality of writing to educational success, and the need for better pedagogical strategies in writing instruction (Fakeye & Ogunyemi, 2010).

In recent decades, technological development has greatly changed practices of communication, especially among young people. Social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have replaced the slower traditional ways of communication as they have made it possible to have instant, real-time interaction (Dekera et al., 2019; Omekwu 2019). Social media makes it easy to generate and share information in virtual communities and has become a crucial tool for learning, networking, and personal expression (Alufohai, 2019; Opara & Adetuyi-Olu-Francis, 2020). Studies show that these platforms have the ability to improve writing practice through regular posts, chats and comments (Smith & Douch in Adetuyi-Olu-Francis, 2019). However, there are still concerns about the negative impact of informal, shortened, and nonstandard writing patterns prevalent in social media environments (Taiwo, 2018; Bernard & Pzandra, 2018). Students increasingly carry such informal expressions to their academic writing, thus jeopardising accuracy, coherence, and linguistic appropriateness (Oyinloye, Oke & Taiwo, 2021).

Given the high prevalence of social media among university students and its prospective implications on academic writing, it is imperative to find out how the use of social media affects writing skills in Nigerian universities. Institutions such as the University of Ilorin and the Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology (BOUESTI) seem to create relevant contexts for examining this relationship. Understanding intersection, or "meeting point" between social media engagement and writing proficiency is key in order to develop effective pedagogical strategies that would take advantage of the strengths associated with digital communication and negate its negative impact on formal writing. This study examines the impact of the use of social media on the writing skills of undergraduates in these institutions.

Statement of the Problem

Writing remains one of the most important but difficult language skills among undergraduates in Nigerian colleges and universities. Even though English is the main language used for teaching, running school, and scholarship (Adekola, 2017; Bamgbose, 2018) many students still have a lot of trouble writing, such as making grammatical errors, spelling, poor punctuation, inappropriate abbreviations, incoherent sentence structure and weak academic tone. These recurring problems of writing present major impediments to academic achievement and indicate wider matters of pedagogy in the teaching of English in Nigeria.

In the same vein, technology has changed the way people communicate quickly. For instance, social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become the major means of communication by university students (Adebayo, 2020; Okon, 2021). Social media offers new environments for literacy that offer opportunities to regularly write, be creative and interact with peers. Research shows that these platforms have the potential to enhance skills of vocabulary and improved writing as well as general engagement in language usage (Ogunlade and Aremu, 2022). However, concerns remain that constant exposure to informal forms of digital writing, characterised by abbreviations, slang, emojis, and nonstandard orthography, can have a negative impact on students' proficiency in formal writing (Alo & Ojo, 2019; Nwachukwu, 2020).

Evidence from empirical studies shows that using social media can help with writing, but there are other studies that show that social media can make bad spelling, bad grammar, and informal writing habits worse for writing in school. Thus, a holistic knowledge on the effect of social media on the writing skills of undergraduates at the institutions of learning in Nigeria has not been fully achieved.

The University of Ilorin and the Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti (BOUESTI) are a good example since it is observed that mobile phones and social networking apps are used extensively by students in the schools.

However little research has been done on the "meeting point" between using social media and writing well in these schools. There is a significant gap in research as there is no clear evidence that social media is helping people write better or that it is worsening writing standards.

Consequently, the problem that this research work seeks to address is the ambiguity about whether the impact of social media usage on the writing skills of undergraduate students at the University of Ilorin and BOUESTI is helpful, harmful, or both and the consequences for the English language pedagogy and standards of academic writing.

Objective of the Study

The study investigates the influence of social media usage on the writing skills of undergraduate students in the University of Ilorin and the Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti (BOUESTI). Specifically, the study is set to:

- i. Examine the extent of social media usage among undergraduate students at the University of Ilorin and BOUESTI.
- ii. Assess the influence of social media usage on students' writing skills, especially grammar, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, and academic expression.
- iii. Identify the positive contributions of social media platforms to students' writing proficiency.
- iv. Investigate the negative effects of frequent exposure to informal digital writing on students' formal academic writing.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What is the extent of social media usage among undergraduates of the University of Ilorin and BOUESTI?
2. How does social media usage influence students' writing skills, including grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and academic tone?
3. What positive impacts do social media platforms have on students' writing development?
4. What negative effects does social media usage have on formal academic writing?

Literature Review

The Role of the English Language in Nigeria

English is the main language of Nigeria and is used in almost all social institutions. It is used in politics, administration, education, religion, the judiciary, business, and digital communication (Mohammed, 2015; Godiya, 2016; Ohia & Isaac, 2020; Ejengho & Ajibade, 2020). It acts as a common language that helps bring people together in a country with

many cultures and languages. Students' academic performance depends on their ability to speak English, since all of their study materials and tests are in English. Liadi (2019) shows that English is important worldwide, while Eyisi (2004) submit that it is highly respected in Nigerian society. Its status as the main language of digital communication makes it even more important in modern communication.

Concept of Language

Language is generally considered a distinctive human characteristic vital for communication, identity development, and self-expression (Ajegena, 2018; Oyeyemi, 2000; Obadare, 2020). In a multilingual nation such as Nigeria, language fosters national development by enhancing communication among various groups (Oyinloye & Fasae, 2020). Writing, an intrinsic aspect of language, facilitates the encoding of ideas and the preservation of knowledge (Agbuun et al., 2018). The value of good speaking and writing skills is evident in the importance of language to human life.

Writing as a Language Skill

Writing is the hardest of the four language skills since it requires cognitive, creative, and psychomotor skills (Shewan, 2020; Obadare, 2021). You need to know how to spell, use grammar, use vocabulary, use punctuation, and organise your thoughts. Studies show that many Nigerian students are not very good at writing. They make mistakes, such as using the wrong words or poor sentence structure (Yara, 2010; Oyinloye & Fasae, 2020). Writing is regarded as an indicator of academic success (Fakeye & Ogunyemi, 2010) and as a means of cultivating critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity (Osa-omoregie, 2020). The difficulties of writing in a second language show how important it is to come up with new ways to teach writing.

Emergency and Expansion of Social Media

Social media has changed how people around the world communicate, enabling them to do so instantly and through technology. People can quickly create and share information across borders on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and YouTube (Dekera et al., 2019). The growth of ICT has accelerated mobile learning by enabling students to use digital devices to access information and learn (Omekwu, 2019; Opara & Adetuyi-Olu-Francis, 2020). Young people use mobile devices frequently, making social media a big part of their everyday lives.

Social Media and Languages Use

Social media serves a dual function in language utilisation. It gives students a chance to practise real writing, see different types of language, and work together with their peers (Smith & Douch in Adetuyi-Olu-Francis, 2019). On the other hand, a short, informal, and conversational writing that prevails on social media provokes the question of its effect on the use of formal language. Acronyms, slang, emoticons, and nonstandard spellings are considered informal components that students often incorporate in writing academic

assignments (Taiwo, 2018; Oyinloye et al., 2021). This transfer can weaken grammar, punctuation, and academic tone.

Social Media and Writing Skills Development

Studies provide inconclusive findings regarding the effect of social media on writing. According to some of the studies, such software as WhatsApp could frequently enhance spelling, vocabulary, and writing fluency (Alsaleem, 2016; Blaker, 2008). Others report the negative uses to be less spelling accuracy, too many abbreviations, and ignoring grammar conventions (Taiwo, 2018). The use of mobile learning can allow individuals to become better at writing, though excessive reliance on digital platforms can render them less mindful of accuracy and the formality.

Specific Platforms and their Influence

WhatsApp provides an easy way to communicate with people in real time, study, and provide feedback. It enhances the information flow and promotes writing through the regular encouragement of people to communicate with each other (Dekera et al., 2019; Alsaleem, 2016).

Facebook

Facebook allows individuals to communicate, exchange ideas, and interact with others. It can encourage students to write in different ways than they normally write due to its informality (Shahbaznezhad, Dotan, and Rashidirad, 2021).

Advantages and Challenges of Social Media

Social media enhances the way individuals interact, receive information, and connect. It aligns with the digital lives of students and the way they learn collectively (Dekera et al., 2019). But due to the prevalence of casual styles of writing, the casual style might adversely affect writing performance, concentration and compliance with rule of formal language use.

Social Media and the Changing Nature of Learning

Scholars emphasise the need to adapt pedagogical practises to the digital realities of the 21st century (Ofodu, 2012; Obadare, 2019; Taiwo, 2013). The traditional chalk and talk methodology cannot work with digital-native learners. Integration of ICT and social media in language instruction transforms learning processes and illustrates how individuals communicate in modern times (Obanya, 2020; Babatunde, 2020; Akeredolu-Ale, 2012). Studies indicate that technology has the potential to abet the development of spelling, vocabulary, and writing (Yumus and Salehi, 2012). Nevertheless, one should strictly adhere to formal writing norms (Taiwo, 2018).

Methodology

The research design adopted in this study was descriptive survey research, which is appropriate when analysing opinions, behaviours, and patterns of a given group. The design enabled a methodical investigation on how the use of social media affects the writing

competencies of under-graduate students at the University of Ilorin and Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti (BOUESTI). The sample size of the study included all undergraduate in the University of Ilorin, and BOUESTI within the 2024/2025 academic session. These schools were selected due to the large number of students and heavy use of social media among undergraduates of these schools. Different faculties were represented with the purpose of having a variety of academic backgrounds and writing styles among the students.

A total of 300 students were sampled in the two universities (undergraduates). The sample size was calculated by Yamane formula of finite population, making it representative and statistically reliable. The sampling was conducted with the help of a multistage approach: the population was divided into faculties, where stratified sampling was employed. Thereafter, individuals were selected through simple random sampling within every stratum. This approach made certain that students of other disciplines were also fairly represented to minimize sample bias. To collect data in the study, the researcher designed a self-administered questionnaire, the Social Media and Writing Skills Questionnaire (SMWSQ). The questionnaire contained two sections. Part A constituted the demographic variables of the respondents, whereas Part B constituted the objective variables. Items were measured using a four-point Likert scale and included choices between Strongly Agree to Strongly disagree.

The face and content validity of the research instruments was verified. To make sure that the questionnaire items and the writing rubric were clear, relevant, and would be in accordance with the objectives of the study, the items of the questionnaire and the writing rubric were reviewed by experts in applied linguistics and language education. Their ideas and changes were considered before the instruments were distributed. A pilot study was conducted with 30 undergraduates from a nearby university who did not participate in the primary study. The pilot's responses were examined using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.82, indicating that the instruments were reliable for the study.

Data collection was carried out by the researchers and trained assistants. The questionnaire was given out in person and online (using Google Forms) to meet the needs of different students. Writing activities were conducted under supervision to ensure authenticity. Participation was voluntary, and responses were kept confidential. The quantitative data from the questionnaire were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 26) at a 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive statistics of the weighted mean were used to analyse students' social media usage.

Results

Research Question 1:

What is the extent of social media usage among undergraduate students of the University of Ilorin and BOUESTI?

Table 1: Analysis of the extent of social media usage among undergraduate students of the University of Ilorin and BOUESTI

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1.	I use social media platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) daily.	2.90	.950	Agreed
2.	I spend a significant amount of my leisure time navigating various social media applications.	3.61	.941	Agreed
3.	I rely on social media as my primary means of communication with friends and classmates.	3.20	.877	Agreed
4.	I often use social media for academic purposes, such as group discussions or assignment updates.	3.11	.687	Agreed
5.	Social media is an essential part of my daily activities as a university student.	2.97	.800	Agree
Weighted Mean		15.79		

Total mean = **15.79**

Cluster mean = **3.16**

Table 1 shows a descriptive analysis of how much undergraduates at the University of Ilorin and BOUESTI use social media. The results show that all the claims had high mean scores, indicating that most people agreed that they use social media a lot. The cluster mean of 3.16 confirms

that the overall level of social media usage is high. The results show that many students use social media daily, as indicated by a mean score of 2.90 and a standard deviation of 0.950. The highest mean score of 3.61 indicates that many students spend much of their free time using apps such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The modest spread around the mean indicates that this behaviour is prevalent among the student body.

Social media also serves as a major channel for interpersonal and academic communication. The average score of 3.20 shows that more and more students are using social media as their main way to talk to friends, which is often more important than talking to them in person. A mean score of 3.11 indicates that students often use social media for group discussions, assignment updates, and academic coordination. This shows how digital platforms are becoming more common in schools. Additionally, the average score of 2.97 shows that social media is a part of students' daily lives. This supports the idea that social media is very important for both the academic and social life of college students. The data

shows that undergraduates in both schools use social media extensively, highlighting how technology shapes their communication and daily academic experiences .

Research Question 2:

How does social media usage influence students’ writing skills, including grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and academic tone?

Table 2: Analysis of how social media usage influences students' writing skills, including grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and academic tone

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1.	My frequent use of social media has influenced how I spell words in my academic writing.	3.52	.962	Agreed
2.	The abbreviations and short forms I use on social media sometimes appear in my formal writing.	1.89	.714	Disagreed
3.	My sentence structure in academic writing is sometimes affected by the informal writing style used on social media.	1.02	.637	Disagreed
4.	Social media use has influenced my ability to maintain a formal academic tone in my writing.	3.48	.585	Agreed
5.	The way I punctuate sentences on social media sometimes carries over into my academic writing.	3.01	.668	Agreed
Weighted Mean		15.92		

Total mean = **15.92**

Cluster mean = **3.18**

Table 2 looks at how using social media affects the writing skills of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin and BOUESTI, especially in terms of grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and academic tone. The results show a cluster mean of 3.18, indicating that, in general, students think social media has a strong effect on how they write formally. The results demonstrate that frequent social media use has a significant effect on spelling in academic writing, as evidenced by the high mean score of 3.52. Also, using social media affects the capacity to keep an appropriate academic tone. Respondents mostly agree that the informal, conversational nature of digital communication sometimes makes it hard for them to maintain the level of formality expected in academic writing. The mean score was 3.48.

Also, a mean of 3.01 suggests that the way people use punctuation on social media is transferred to professional writing. Many students use nonstandard punctuation when writing online, such as leaving out full stops, overusing emojis, or using several exclamation points. This could affect their academic writing practices. However, the results also show that not all parts of writing are highly affected by social media use. The average score of 1.89

indicates that people did not agree with the idea that abbreviations and short forms commonly used on social media often appear in their professional writing. They also disagreed that the informal patterns utilised in online communication have a big effect on the structure of sentences in their academic writing, as shown by a mean score of 1.02.

The results show that using social media has a clear effect on several aspects of students' writing skills, especially spelling, academic tone, and punctuation. On the other hand, elements that require more careful thought, such as sentence structure and the avoidance of abbreviations, are not as affected by informal digital writing practices.

Research Question 3:

What positive impacts do social media platforms have on students' writing development?

Table 3: Analysis of the positive impacts that social media platforms have on students' writing development

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1.	Social media platforms help me improve my writing fluency through constant communication.	3.41	.805	Agreed
2.	Interacting with diverse users on social media exposes me to new vocabulary.	3.02	.724	Agreed
3.	Participating in online discussions enhances my ability to express ideas clearly.	2.85	.624	Agreed
4.	Posting and commenting on social media encourages me to write more frequently.	2.98	.781	Agreed
5.	Social media platforms help me develop creativity in expressing my thoughts in writing.	3.11	.887	Agreed
Weighted Mean		15.37		

Total mean = **15.37**

Cluster mean = **3.07**

Table 3 shows how social media platforms have helped undergraduates in the University of Ilorin and BOUESTI improve their writing. The cluster mean of 3.07 shows that respondents feel that social media helps them improve their writing in many ways. The findings demonstrate that social media substantially improves writing fluency, as seen by a high mean score of 3.41. This indicates that students who frequently communicate on platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram benefit from ongoing writing practice. Students' writing development is also helped by being around others who speak different languages. A mean score of 3.02 indicates that interaction with varied users, both local and international, introduces students to new vocabulary.

Also, taking part in online forums helps you express your thoughts more effectively. Respondents think that social media gives them chances to write and improve their opinions, especially when they are having conversations that need to be clear, persuasive, or

explain something. The average score was 2.85. The investigation also found that writing often is another good result. The average score of 2.98 shows that students agree that making updates, replying to messages, and joining comment threads make them want to write more often. Also, using social media helps people be more creative in their writing. The average score of 3.11 shows that digital platforms give students the opportunity and flexibility to try out new ways of writing, use language in unexpected ways, and say what they think in interesting ways.

The investigation shows that, in general, social media sites provide many useful ways for students to improve their writing skills. These include better writing fluency, a broader vocabulary, clearer expression of ideas, more writing, and greater inventiveness. These favourable effects show how social media can be a useful tool for helping college students improve their writing skills.

Research Question 4:

What negative effects does social media usage have on formal academic writing?

Table 4: Analysis of the negative effects that social media usage has on formal academic writing

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1.	I sometimes use social media abbreviations (e.g., “u,” “bcos,” “asap”) in academic writing by mistake.	3.01	.995	Agreed
2.	My attention to correct spelling has reduced because I frequently use simplified spellings on social media.	3.11	.890	Agreed
3.	Social media use has contributed to an increase in grammatical errors in my formal writing.	2.12	1.016	Disagreed
4.	I struggle to maintain proper punctuation in academic writing due to habits formed on social media.	3.00	.894	Agreed
5.	My academic writing quality has declined due to frequent exposure to informal online communication.	2.19	.779	Disagreed
Weighted Mean		14.93		

Total mean = **14.93**

Cluster mean = **2.99**

Table 4 presents an analysis of the negative impacts of social media use on formal academic writing among undergraduates at the University of Ilorin and BOUESTI.

The cluster average of 2.99 indicates that participants tend to perceive social media as having a moderate, negative effect on particular aspects of their academic writing. The data indicate that social media abbreviations tend to permeate into the academic writing of students, as shown by a mean score of 3.01. This illustrates that informal short phrases like u,

bcos, and asap typically employed on online platforms may occur unknowingly when undertaking a formal task. Social media participation also seems to influence attention to spelling accuracy. The mean is 3.11, which indicates that there are consensuses that the use of simplified spellings regularly on the internet can reduce how students pay attention to spelling correctly in academic situations. The punctuation patterns learned in the internet world also affect intellectual writing. The mean value of 3.00 indicates that students often struggle with proper punctuation because of the informal, flexible conventions of social media. Nonetheless, social media use was not strongly correlated with the development of grammatical errors in scholarly writing by respondents. The results show a mean value of 2.12, which suggests a lack of agreement to the statement that internet communication practises significantly affect grammar. Equally, the participants did not agree with the assumption that the overall quality of their academic writing has declined because of the exposure to casual online communication with mean score of 2.19. Overall, the statistics indicate that the application of social media adversely influences some superficial writing aspects, such as abbreviation use, spelling accuracy, and punctuation. Nonetheless, more profound aspects of writing like grammar, and even academic excellence, are not perceived to be significantly affected.

Discussion of Findings

The results of this study indicate that social media is used extensively by undergraduates in both schools. Respondents described using platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter daily, and that social media was an important part of their academic and social lives. This aligns with what researchers have found: that social media is becoming a significant part of young people's daily lives, particularly among college students (Adebiyi, 2020; Ajiboye, 2021). The high usage levels indicate that digital communication platforms are becoming the way in which young people engage with one another and share information, and this trend is evident across the world.

This study supports assertions in the literature that the digital era has altered the habits of literacy and fostered continuous interaction with online communication platforms (Crystal, 2011). Scholars, for studying the English language usage in Nigeria, have noted that the high level of the integration of ICT enhances the importance of English in both the formal educational environment and the informal digital environment (Bamgbose, 2000). The high level of use observed is consistent with national and global communication pattern. The results show that social media usage affects students' writing skills, especially in terms of spelling, grammar, and writing in an academic tone. Respondents agreed that habits formed on social media, such as spelling words incorrectly, informal punctuation, and conversational tones extend into their academic writing. This is consistent with scholars who argue that the informal nature of online conversation promotes a lack of attention to the conventional

standards of written communication and may have a negative impact on formal writing (Thurlow, 2013; Adeboye, 2019).

However respondents did not strongly agree that social media affects their sentence structure or leads to more grammatical mistakes . This contradicts partially a previous research that states that digital writing conventions have the potential to undermine grammatical proficiency (Ogunmodimu, 2014). Building sentences and using grammar requires more thought processes which makes them less likely to be affected by informal writing online. Similar results were suggested in research that showed that students could differentiate between the formal and informal writing situations despite a significant involvement in social media (Umar & Idris, 2020).

The study also shows that social media can help students improve their writing in several ways. Respondents all agreed that frequent communication online makes them better writers, exposes them to new vocabulary, enhances clarity of expression and encourages creative writing. This finding supports the idea that social media can be a place for students to learn informally and improve their language skills by using them regularly (Lankshear& Knobel, 2015).

According to Warschauer (2010), digital platforms stimulate intercultural contact with lexical development. This is because being around a variety of online users help people acquire new words and languages. The increase in fluency supports the idea that writing regularly, particularly in writing across a casual environment makes writing more effortless and builds confidence (Hyland 2016). Moreover, the possibilities for creativity point to the adaptable and expressive nature of digital writing environments and their promotion of experimentation and individual voice, important ingredients in writing skill development.

The results indicate that students occasionally use social media abbreviations, misspellings, and casual punctuation when writing formally in an academic setting. This supports earlier research showing that digital writing conventions, such as abbreviations, use of emoji and informal orthography, can undermine academic writing conventions (Tagg, 2012; Adomi &Edewor, 2018). However, respondents did not feel that social media has a big impact on their grammar, or the quality of their academic writing as a whole. This contradicts findings of scholars who argue that high exposure may affect grammatical competence. (Ogunmodimu, 2014). It supports the argument that whilst social media does have an impact on the superficial conventions of writing, basic structural and grammatical skills remain intact (Crystal, 2011; Lunsford, 2013). The diverse findings suggest the social media-writing proficiency relationship to be neither always negative nor straightforward. Social media impacts writing habits that are easy to adopt, like spelling and punctuation, but may have less impact on basic writing abilities required in academia.

Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of social media use on the writing skills of undergraduates of University of Ilorin and BOUESTI. The results showed that social media is an important part of students' everyday life and it serves both social and academic purposes. The high usage underscores the pervasiveness of digital communication among contemporary universities learners. The research showed that social media has both a good and a detrimental impact on the writing abilities of students. On the positive side, using digital platforms often has an impact in terms of improving writing fluency, vocabulary expansion, encourages creativities , and provides opportunities for writing expressions. These advantages demonstrate the potential of social media as the sort of informal but effective platform that can improve certain aspects of writing proficiency.

However, the results also indicate that social media introduces challenges to formal academic writing. Some students unconsciously transfers non-standard digital spelling, abbreviations, informal punctuation and conversational style into academic context. Although some of the more fundamental elements, such as grammar and sentence structure remain less affected, the effect on superficial features of writing warrants an increase of awareness and pedagogical intervention.

Recommendations

The findings of the study suggest that teachers who teach English and communication skills should incorporate digital literacy into the curriculum, educating students to differentiate between informal digital writing and formal academic writing. Explicit education about code-switching between online and academic registers would also help students deal with poor writing habits.

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